

Realization

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BY

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Realization

BY JOSEPH STEWART, LL.M.

VOL. I

JULY, 1901

NO. 5

The Power of Concentration.

The Multiplex Concept, and its Reduction to One.

HERETOFORE we have considered the effort at concentration with reference to but one subject of contemplation. The student does not always find this method the easier, and in other respects there is advantage in beginning with more than one and gradually eliminating until the sole concept desired remains. This is found easier because it is a method which meets with the least resistance from the established habit of thought. The mind is usually diffusive, and from long habit is accustomed to pass from subject to subject without hindrance; therefore the holding of but one concept without some mode of gradually attaining it becomes wearisome.

This principle of gradually eliminating from the consciousness all perception excepting of that into which the consciousness is to be moulded, is the one applied in certain Oriental practices which will receive consideration at another time.

It will be assumed that in making the special effort at concentration the student has observed all the preliminary steps as detailed, and reached the point where the mind is to be held to the subject of his meditation. He will then choose the class of concepts which shall, as a whole, become the subject of his concentration. Here the field is broad, and one need not be limited by

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any considerations other than his immediate object, which it is assumed will always be worthy.

Having chosen the class, he will then confine his mentation to that alone, and not permit the intrusion of any thought connected with any other. The compliance with the preliminary directions, including a fair degree of exclusion of the external world (and the accomplishment of this much) is no small degree of success. Having the mind well concentrated upon the class, give it freedom in going over the subjects comprised in it, and arranging them (if there be no natural order) in the most logical and desirable order. Having determined the order in which they will be held, take up each concept successively and make it the subject of quiet, passive consideration, with the one purpose of attaining the deepest insight into its meaning and nature. This insight will come not only from the intellectual perception, but it will be illumined by the subliminal knowledge. When you have treated all the concepts thus, then find in thought a mental expression corresponding in words for your conception of each. This expression will, of course, be much inferior to the excellence of your conception, as word-symbols are wholly inadequate to the expression of the deeper knowledge and experience. This will have consumed the time of a number of sittings, for no haste should be made, and each concept should be dwelt upon until it shall be perceived in its fuller and deeper meaning.

Having thus determined the class and its component subjects, and reduced the latter to a definite order, perceived their deeper meaning and formulated an expression of such for each, these should not be departed from for the immediate purposes of this practice, except as the further process of elimination shall leave but one.

For instance, each concept should be entertained in concentration in the order, and thought of in the formula determined. When the mind shall have become thor-

oughly acquainted with this so that it flows, as it is said, gently and unresistingly into these concepts, then the order may be varied at will, if further mental training be desired in the particular instance.

The process of elimination may then be begun, by which, instead of reviewing the whole number of concepts, all but one shall be used for a time. When this becomes entirely natural eliminate another, and so proceed until finally only one shall remain, and practice the undivided concentration upon that.

Let it be assumed, for example, that the attributes of the soul have been selected as the general class; such will add some higher realization as well as train the mind. In the preliminary meditations you will have selected a few prominent ones, determined the order in which they shall be held, perceived their deeper meaning, and reduced such to formal expressions that can be held in thought.

You will bear in mind that any formulation of your thought into a definite expression corresponding to words will be inferior to the perception which you will have attained; but such is desirable in order to secure a certainty of form to which the mind may be held.

The form being ascertained, take up each successively in its order and conform the thought to the formula determined. Do not vary the order or the expression. When the last is finished, begin with the first and repeat the group, and so continue during the time of concentration.

When the mind has become entirely conformable to this practice, you may, as each concept is taken separately, gradually dismiss the words and let the consciousness flow into the deeper meaning, unexpressed in form; simply feel the meaning.

The method of elimination should then be taken up, first using the thought-formulas, and when the number has been reduced to one, dismissing the form of expression, and merging the consciousness into the meaning.

Effect Upon Consciousness.

Generally speaking, the purpose of concentration may be said to be the training of the mind, and enabling one to direct its functions. This is undoubtedly the immediate result. It is desired to point out other results. These are effects upon the sum of consciousness, and upon the physical and psychical co-ordinates.

To understand its effect upon consciousness it is necessary to bear in mind the relation between consciousness and mental action. If we define mind to be the specialized form of consciousness related to our normal life, the reason for the power of the mental states over the consciousness becomes apparent. Consciousness *is*, and all else that we are, or can be, is only a change in its state, some specialization of the whole or of its parts in some determined way and to some limited end. The normal mind being such a specialization (the emergent point of consciousness upon the physical plane), it is apparent that its functions must powerfully affect the sum of the conscious states which manifest through the normal life.

It is therefore evident that in the control and direction of our mentation we may find the power to create to a great extent those states of consciousness whose sum makes up the general content of life. Inasmuch also as the expression of deeper consciousness is often inhibited by the normal manner or measure of thought, the control of the latter will make possible a disclosure of the former, and one may thus come to know more of his real self and profit by a fuller manifestation of its faculties and knowledge in the normal life.

A further fact of importance to this consideration is the relation between the normal thought and that marvelous part of ourselves which is becoming known as subliminal consciousness. We have seen elsewhere that much of that sum of submerged states is composed of memories of the past normal life, of the results of experience, of the impressions received and retained

from the normal thought. The results of these are ever tending to emerge into and modify the normal expression. If we would control the character of such states it must be accomplished primarily through that power which creates their special characteristics, namely, the normal mind.

Effect Upon the Physical.

Its effect upon the physical would follow as a necessity from the relations between mind and body. The body is the co-ordinated physical equivalent of the sum of mental and psychical states. The two factors are one in expression, though apparently so diverse.

The organic processes are almost wholly under the domination of the subliminal segment of consciousness—popularly termed the subconscious mind—whose functions are organized through the long process of evolution.

This separation between the manifestations of the subliminal mind and those of the normal leads to the popular belief that the normal mind is ineffective over the functions of the body. That such a belief is erroneous is proven by common observation and experience; and when the union of the two—the normal and subliminal—is effected in any marked degree, as by some great mental or psychical crisis, which involuntarily blends them, or by the methods of concentration, the immediate and powerful effect of the normal upon the body is perceptible. All have observed the destructive power of fear, anger, remorse, worry; and the startling phenomena of faith cures and mental cures are not unfamiliar, while stigmata and like remarkable effects have long been known to the literature of religious ecstasy.

The physical equivalent (changes in structure) of normal mental action scientifically regulated and directed has been noted and repeatedly demonstrated in those parts of the organism immediately co-ordinated with such mental action.

This power over the profounder functions and the life processes may in a measure be consciously acquired by affecting a closer union of these two phases of consciousness or mind.

Effect Upon the Psychic Element.

Its effect upon the psychic element is as marked as upon the factors above considered. This substance and energy, which seems to bear such a mysterious relation to life itself, apparently standing midway between the grosser body and the mind, is in a great degree the basis of well-being; it seems to be a vital component of the life-expression. With many it is perceptibly under the direction of the mental life. Subject to the most wasteful dissipation under an excessive, disorderly mental habit, it becomes at once conserved and healthfully directed under the orderly habit and the higher mental life.

In the degree in which concentration exceeds ordinary mental action in power, definiteness, and continuity, its effects are correspondingly greater in all the above-named particulars.

Power Over the Normal Life.

As the mental states constitute the controlling factor in determining the states of consciousness which so largely constitute the normal life, the regulation, control and change of such mental states according to some rational and beneficent plan will accordingly powerfully modify the character-content of the Self.

The power to change a mental state at will is likewise the power to modify in a marked degree the dominant normal consciousness. It is not only a means of escape from mental and psychic ills, but a mode of mastery over them.

As the mental expression is largely the response to environment, this expression may be modified at will by selecting and recognizing the desirable and disregarding the undesirable.

Creates the Conception of Our World.

It has been said that the mind creates our world for us. It is true that what we know of the world is, in the last analysis, merely a subjective state. Many of these states have an objective correspondence in a physical fact in the external world, but a great part of our conception and our idea of life has no such basis. The power of controlling the mind is the power of creating in this realm the character of world in which we would exist.

Where there is this power and the entire liberty to exercise it, there is a possibility of its misuse. For instance, one may, through infatuation with the power and a misconceived philosophy, place the mind in a false relation, as by denying a physical fact or affirming physical or metaphysical untruth, and attempting to live such unwisely created state. Though this may be done successfully as far as the effort is concerned (and with accompanying evidences of psychic changes), it is not unfoldment, but hallucination; not harmonizing the ego with a wider field of cosmic truth, but a willful alienation from it. The mischief of such may be far-reaching.

How may this power be used to bring true happiness and unfoldment—not hallucination—into the life? Not by creating untrue relations, though momentarily pleasing to one's philosophy; but by exercising selection in the wide field of truth and fact and thus relating the mind to those elements in it which will contribute to happiness and well-being, and disregarding (but not denying the existence of) those which are entirely non-essential for this purpose.

Instead, therefore, of negating facts which exist, the mind should select. It is never needful to hold in the consciousness every fact that can be perceived. To hold in the mind the multitude of facts of imperfection, of ceaseless change, is not unfoldment. Where the state is a purely subjective one created by the per-

son's thought and having no correspondence in a physical fact, as, for example, an imaginary fear, the denial of it is only an indirect way of arriving at the opposite state—of supplanting it with confidence and courage. The mode selected might be more direct. Somewhat the same principle applies to physical pain or distress. The denial of the pain is simply a mode of changing a subjective state, which mode might be more direct and efficacious if better chosen; but as long as it does not traverse a truth—the existence of the injury—but is merely a mode of changing the subject's relation to it, as by saying, in effect, "I feel no pain," it is not open to greater objection than indirectness. It is equivalent to the expression of a will, which if able to realize its object does so in a change in the state of consciousness.

Power Over the Psychic Element.

The power acquired over the psychic element may be considerable. Ordinarily its existence is but little known or recognized. We may be confident that the summation which we know as man includes no errant or unnecessary forces or powers, but that all are of the greatest importance to him. The disregard or waste of the evident normal powers is generally condemned; but little heed is given to the possible use or misuse of the more subtle ones which experiment and abundant phenomena prove to be resident in man.

We may take a very mild but prevalent example. The difference is well-known between the condition before and that after excessive anger or emotion of any kind. There has been a lowering of the vital expression, a sensible depletion, a perceptible depression of spirits. Though the mind may be soon restored, the changed condition still persists. The cause lies largely in the psychic component, as careful observation will show. There has been a wasteful dissipation of it.

It is this intimate connection between the mind

and its states and this subtle element which makes it possible for the controlled and trained mind to acquire the further power over the latter; and health and vigor are intimately connected with this proper control.

Mind and Body.

As the whole man is a unit in expression, we should expect to find a correspondence in the physical organism to the more masterful control and use of the mind, as through concentration. The expectation is justified; for scientific experiment has shown that increased mentation has resulted in increased brain-cell structure, and that radical improvement in particular bodily structure has been effected through systematic and properly directed mental action.

In the normal life-expression the interaction between mind and body is very intimate. Mind in this expression has a physical basis in the structures of the brain; it follows that its easiest functions are along the lines of this previously established basis. The special direction or employment of the mind changes this basis accordingly, making possible a new order of mental expression, and from which corresponding physical changes result in the organism.

Affirmations and Denials.

It is evident that the power of the mind when directed in concentration is great upon all planes; therefore one should have a care not to abuse it. He should not mistake its possession for a warrant to use it indiscriminately. Its employment may perchance be misdirected, as well as otherwise. For instance, the power of affirmations and denials may be considerable over the consciousness; but if they proceed upon false premises they are unwise. If they do not assume that which is untrue or deny that which is true, though they may have the effect of alienating the mind from facts which are undesirable to contemplate, their use

is commendable. They are only means of changing the mental state, and through it the consciousness. They are often indirect, and in such cases could be advantageously exchanged for some better method.

In attempting their systematic use one should analyze his purpose, and after ascertaining the object he is seeking and reducing it to its simplest form, choose the most direct formula expressive of the end to be attained. As, if the wish be for peace, serenity, etc., the affirmation should be an expression of such state within the self.

A mental denial is generally a recognition, in a measure, of the condition one seeks to avoid, and instead of banishing it wholly from the consciousness, tends to retain it though denying its existence. It is an indirect way of approaching a result which is more quickly and efficaciously reached by a healthy affirmation.

Character Building.

Character building, though the result of long and cumulative experience, may be the subject of methods which bring about more rapid changes ; and while it is not here assumed that the fundamental character of expression can be thus entirely changed by a few years of mental effort, yet it is believed that within a wide range of possible variation, marked changes may be effected by the direction of the mind from the concepts which result in the oblique expression, to those which constitute the desirable.

The effects of all experience are conserved in the subliminal self whose powers of retention make this possible. The exercise of concentration produces a more profound effect there than ordinary mentation does. This fact gives the knowledge as to how that which is desirable may be implanted in a perfectly normal manner, and without doing violence to the self. So long as the choice of the concept is wise, the result must be desirable.

Thus any desired concept or line of thought may be impressed upon the subliminal consciousness and thence emerge in the expression of character. We are doing this daily by ordinary thought and desire; it may be done more quickly and in a greater degree by directed effort. The physical basis for the expression of that which is thus impressed is found, as before mentioned, in changed brain-structure; the psychical basis for its recurrence exists in the subliminal memory and the tendency to express outwardly that which has been perceived by the Self.

Specific Concepts.

In view of these principles the importance of specific concepts is perceived. The choice of these should be made with some care, for as they are held in concentration their effect impressed upon the profounder self will become part of the life-expression. If truth-expressive, they will wield a beneficent effect upon the life.

So it is found that all rational expressions of optimism, by which the mind comes into rapport with the good and hopeful in all things, are greatly beneficial. The thoughts of perfect health and abundant life, of oneness with the infinite and the possession potentially of divine attributes, are desirable. Note that all such are constructive in their character, and that they are further distinguished by the quality of non-alienation. The normal thought suffers from its hallucination of alienation or separation from these higher possibilities. The resulting limitations are removed by changing this thought.

Upon the other hand, care should be exercised to avoid the implanting of concepts or ideas which have the effect of hallucinating or limiting the self, or destroying harmonious relation with rational environment. These are known in psychic investigation as "fixed ideas" and "fixed emotions," and their species

are many. Among these one should especially avoid all those which (1) disharmonize the life with the healthful in social and physical environment; otherwise one may be alienating himself from the means best suited to his orderly progression; and (2) those which disharmonize the life with spiritual unfoldment; as by the accentuation of unregulated and ungoverned desires. These desires are usually directed toward wholly material things, and while often effective they nevertheless subvert all possibility of other attainment while they are dominant.

EVERY one knows that talents are often misused or perverted, but the possibility of such perversion of the subliminal impulse is not recognized, except in a general and indirect way. The study of hallucinations and "fixed ideas" is informing us here.

These abnormal cases follow the general law, and what is true of them is true of the common trend of mind. One may suffer in a "normal" way the same kind of fixation of thought and so pervert the deeper impulses. Thus the intense habit of thought or purpose centered upon an inconsequential, unworthy, or harmful object conditions the deeper impulses accordingly. There are as many phases of this as there are absorbing petty ambitions and selfish purposes.

The environmental world often holds the attention to the exclusion of all else. It is very necessary to maintain a full normal relation with it, but it should not become a "fixed idea" or a class of such, to the exclusion of other desirable ones. It is quite true that such may bring "success," but it may not so well bring the happiness and advancement one seeks.

Happily these things are self-adjusting, and as the tendency is toward an ultimate healthful expression, each worker finds the desirable measure for his immediate needs.

The Psychic Breathings.

The Physical Act.

UNDER normal conditions the physical act of breathing is necessary to the continuation of life in the body. With most persons it is reduced to the minimum effort which will effect this, but it is as susceptible to improvement for the maintenance of health and vital energy as is any other function. It is the primary means of supplying the blood with oxygen and of eliminating carbon dioxide. A systematic practice of deep breathing will produce decided constructive and curative effects.

Breathing is of all the automatic functions that which is most under the immediate influence of the normal mind. The operation has not been wholly resigned to the subliminal self. There is no doubt a deep and sufficient reason for this, which to me appears to be found in the difference between the relation of this function and that of others to physical environment. For instance, the function of the heart has to do almost wholly with internal bodily conditions which the subliminal self controls; hence, it is organized and is but slightly under the control of the normal mind. Upon the other hand, respiration has to do not only with an internal condition, but also with an external environment (the atmosphere, which may vary in its charge of oxygen, its temperature, humidity, etc.), the relations of the body with which are determined by the normal, not the subliminal, mind. It is necessary, therefore, that the normal mind should retain a considerable share of control in order to meet the varying conditions. This fact should suggest that the disregard of rational breathing exercises is not in harmony with the natural order of things. It negatives the opinion that involuntary breathing necessarily supplies the entire need.

The Psychic Concomitant.

While all that may be said of physical effects of breathing might be readily admitted, its relation to psychics is not so easily perceived or granted. Such psychic phenomena as may occur associated with certain methods of breathing are seldom the subject of common experience or observation, and when experienced the cause of the relation may not be apparent. The phenomena are not difficult to verify; the theories of explanation are not offered as necessarily conclusive, but as having a high degree of probability. So much of the matter as is here treated is but a branch of the larger subject, which includes the prana-yama, to be spoken of hereafter.

The main fact noted is that connected with special methods of breathing certain perceptible psychic changes occur by which the organism may become renewed in vital power.

This raises the query, Whence this vital force? No doubt much of it is resident in the nervous centers, as the explanation here given will indicate; but this in nowise excludes the possibility of an inflow or accession from a cosmical or universal source. The healthful physical element taken from the atmosphere in breathing is oxygen. We know its necessity and its chemical effects. We can not say with like certainty that through respiration a purely vital or psychic force is also imported into the system, for as yet physical science does not recognize such energy except as a result of chemical changes in the body, and psychic science has not sufficient data, though individuals may have sufficient to satisfy themselves.

But it does not therefore follow that such is not the case, for it can not be assumed that we are acquainted with all or even any assignable portion of the forces at work in the universe, or with the manner of their operation.

In view of this it is interesting to note that in the literature of religion and esoterism there are many allusions to a vital principle cosmically or universally disseminated, which finds a focus of activity for the time being in the living organism. Thus we have the "breath of life," "the universal breath," "the out-breathings and the in-breathings of Infinite Being," "the fixation of the astral light by an emission of divine will," etc., in which the analogy with breath is maintained.

Is it true that such a principle of universal life, either by its own law or otherwise, ebbs and flows in the organism, renewing life and strength and health? There are no *a priori* grounds against it. We know that we are in the presence of an infinite energy to which all matter is plastic and to whose laws all nature conforms. There is no place where this is not; there are no manifestations which are not its known concomitants. Thus all breathings are psychical.

The Resident Energy.

There is ample evidence of a psychic energy which has become specialized in the individual. There are no conclusive theories as to the mode or manner of such specialization. It may be in a large part a result of organic processes, whose only recognized results are the purely chemical ones. We can not say, however, that this known sum of energy can not be immediately augmented or renewed from a universal source.

On page 30 reference has been made particularly to the presence of this psychic element. That this includes more than mere nervous force known to physiology is apparent from a perusal of the literature of psychic phenomena, or a personal investigation. Careful personal observation and experiments may acquaint one with its presence in himself.

Speaking of that quantum which is a momentarily stable part of the self, its location becomes an

interesting as well as important question for this consideration. While facts tend to establish that there is a sheath of subtle substance around the body, which is charged with the personal characteristics, is susceptible to mental states and to will, is greatly extended in hypnosis and quiescent states, and concentrated in normal ones, it is probable that the nervous system as a whole, and the great nerve centers particularly, are the seat of much of this energy.

There are many facts which indicate this. It has long been noted that many of the phenomena commonly termed psychic occurring in the organism, proceed from some nervous plexus. Clairvoyance is often experienced directly from the solar plexus, and Prof. F. W. Barrett and many others have noted that in cases of automatism there is often a *malaise* or other perceptible sensation in the region of this same psychic center. The yoga philosophy includes the idea of the storage of memory and energy in the great centers; and the supposed release and rising of the same from a lower to a higher center constitutes a stage of psychic development accomplished by the prana-yama breathing.

Though thus stored in, or associated with, the nervous system the latter is not always essential to its functioning, as is shown by the phenomena in which there is an extension of sensation far beyond the limits of the body.

Under Control of Mind.

No doubt this element is the working power of the subliminal self, as it is primarily associated with that part of the system under its immediate control. Certain classes of psychic phenomena show it to be subject to the direction of subliminal mind in subjective conditions of the person. Further, the deep effect of the normal mental states and emotions upon it is well known. It is demonstrable that it can in an increasing degree be controlled and directed by the normal thought and will.

This psychic flow is very perceptible by many, and sensibly proceeds from the hands in strong emotive states. Often a deep sigh will be accompanied by this sensation indicating an outflow of this force. That this energy thus proceeding outward under the direction of the normal will is capable to producing ascertainable effects, I have amply demonstrated.

Breathing, a Mode of Control.

Between the status of this element resident in the body and the normal breathing there appears to be a relation. It is said that with the inspiration or the holding of breath the aura is more closely concentrated, and that with expiration it is extended. Aside from any natural connection between respiration and psychic energy, the act of breathing may be made the means of uniting the mind with this energy, and through this union directing its manifestations. If there be any deeper relation between a cosmical energy, a mystical "breath of life," and the physical act of breathing conjoined with a special mental attitude as has been claimed, the same method would realize the benefits of it.

The concentration of consciousness upon any of the nervous centers will effect a concentration there of this vital energy, as well as tend to bring under the mental control the energy resident at that point.

Method.

With these facts and suggestions in mind, the reasons for the following directions, and the results of their practice, will be more readily perceived.

I. Follow the directions for Passive Concentration in so far as they relate to favorable surroundings, posture, abstraction from environmental conditions, etc. Though this is desirable it is not indispensable, for any conditions will suffice which will permit undisturbed effort.

Let the mind be perfectly united with the effort. Begin with rhythmic gentle breathing, holding the thought steadily of the inflow of life energy. The clothing should be loose, and there should be no restraint upon the body to impede natural respiration. Let the lungs expand first downward, the diaphragm falling and the abdominal muscles relaxing, producing marked movement in that region. As the breath is drawn deeper, the lower, then the upper chest expands. With the exhalation the chest first falls, then the abdomen subsides. This constitutes the complete respiration, which few observe. The value in making the abdominal breathing, as it is sometimes called, a pronounced feature is to be found in its vitalizing and psychic effect upon the solar plexus. Gradually increase the depth of breathing, maintaining its rhythmic character. Continue this for several minutes, until the whole being seems harmonized with the effort.

Next inhale deep breath, making the abdominal breathing the marked feature, and in doing so let the thought proceed as though conducting the life-force from the left nostril slowly down the left side of the spinal column to the base, or the region of the sacral plexus, and while the breath is retained hold the thought at this point. As the breath is slowly expired carry the thought upward on the right side of the column, but not out. After the abdomen naturally relaxes with the expired breath, contract its muscles, drawing it inward. Inhale, conducting the thought in a similar manner down the right side of column, holding as before, and up the left side with the exhalation. Continue this, alternating the direction of thought-currents as above noted.

It will be noticed that the thought thus directed traverses the general system of the sympathetic ganglia which are situated upon each side of the spinal column. In a short time one will become conscious of the flow of the nervous or psychic energy, as

the thought thus conducted awakens the latent power in these centers and carries it along in its control.

After ten minutes (more or less, as one's condition may suggest) of this breathing, relax the effort and concentrate the thought at the solar plexus, to which is thus gathered an accession of psychic energy, affecting the whole being through this center.

II. Practice the same as in I, but instead of concentrating at the solar plexus, concentrate the thought successively in different parts of the body, conducting the vital energy slowly and at will, from point to point.

III. Select suitable surroundings as before. Sit in plain chair, back free from chair; feet on the floor, hands with palms down, resting on knees, fingers extended, muscles of forearms and hands tense. Close the eyes and fix the mind upon the purpose. Begin with slow and deep breathing, making the abdominal breath the strong feature. Gradually increase the rapidity and decrease the depth of breathing. Hold the thought of inflow of life-force.

After several minutes the strong sensations in fingers, hands, and arms begin, indicating inflow. After they are pronounced in degree resume the normal breathing, but continue position and other requisites, at least until the sensation ceases.

This and I are adaptations from Oriental practices.

IV. Stand erect with the arms at the sides. Inspire gently and at the same time raise the arms outward to a horizontal position, palms of hands turned downward, fingers extended and muscles drawn tense. While retaining breath maintain this position. Gently increase depth of the breath and rise on the balls of the feet, turn palms upward and slowly bring the arms forward directly in front. Increase depth of breath and rising still higher on the balls of the feet, slowly close the fingers against the muscular tension. Increase depth of breath and slowly bring the closed hands in-

ward, against the muscular tension of the arms, until they touch the chest. Then slowly expire, relax all muscles, and resume original position. Begin with seven such breaths and increase the number as may seem desirable.

This exercise is best taken in the morning on rising or immediately after bath, and in a room with the windows open so as to insure pure fresh air. It is an admirable exercise for some convenient spot along a woodland path where the benefits of the sunshine and pure air may be had.

V. Not only is there great power in the sunshine, but it apparently aids the organism in appropriating vital energy. Be seated in sunshine, if possible on a seat upon whose back the arms may be extended, palms upward, fingers extended, all of which bring the muscles into tension with the least effort.

Inspire deeply, using chiefly the abdominal breath and fixing the mind upon the inflow of energy. Retain breath for same length of time, and exhale gently in same time. Repeat same for several minutes, and note the sensations around the fingers as of the play of subtle forces, and the extension of same through hands and arms. These reach the maximum of intensity in a few minutes and then subside.

Note the increased vigor and the power of endurance after this practice.

In practicing any of these exercises caution should be observed not to strain or over-tax the lungs in any degree. If there is any indication of such the exercise should, without fail, be curtailed or entirely discontinued, as may be prudent, and by a system of simple breathing exercises accustom the lungs gradually to greater strength and higher efficiency.

In any event, careful selection may be made, and one should adapt to his condition those exercises which appear to yield the most favorable results.

The Fire-Ordeal.

I.

"Judicium Dei."

ATTENTION has recently been directed to a remarkable rite—that of the Fire-Walk—which has been witnessed among Oriental peoples. Mr. Andrew Lang, the eminent scholar and writer, has stimulated thought and research by his valuable contributions to the subject, and has pointed out the identity of the phenomena with ancient practices.

The interest in these modern cases lies in the fact that they are inexplicable upon known laws, and suggest supernormal faculty or power. Before examining them, a brief glance at the historical claims, which are substantially identical, will be interesting.

One of the most widely held beliefs has been that supernatural powers (in each case the God of the believer) would interpose miraculously to vindicate the guiltless. This belief found expression in a number of trial-ordeals which were substantially the same wherever practiced. The principal forms of these were the fire-ordeal, the water-ordeal, the corsned or morsel of execration, and wager of battle, termed in the common law *judicium Dei*—the judgment of God, and were appeals to supernatural powers to demonstrate the innocence of the accused.

Happily the civilized world has grown out of this terrible practice. There are survivals in our forms of expression which indicate how common the thought was once, as "going through fire and water to serve a friend," which refers to the practice of undergoing these ordeals as a proxy; and, "may this morsel be my last," a survival of the corsned in a protestation of truth.

Some Warrant for Practice?

It can hardly be supposed that a practice involving the lives of persons could have prevailed over the world and have been wholly devoid of occasional results which to some extent gave reason for a belief in it. If, without deception, it must have inevitably resulted in conviction, it is difficult to account for its long survival. The cases differ from common folk-lore traditions in that they were of the people's experience, enacted with terrible reality, sanctioned by custom and law, enforced by judicial orders, and related in the history of jurisprudence and religion.

On this point W. S. Gibson, F. S. A., in *Archæologia*, vol. 32, 287, says:

"That all the accused were not found innocent by the corsned and immersion, nor all guilty by the hot water and the hot iron, is evident from the permanence in public estimation of these methods of appeal. * * * The theories that have been suggested do not apply to all methods of trial, nor do they satisfactorily show by what human means these fearful proofs were resorted to with impunity. Their constant employment by almost every nation of Christendom during not less than six centuries is an historical fact inconsistent with the theory that collusion and fraud were practiced by the clergy."

Notwithstanding such considerations, these narratives would continue to be regarded as evidences only of human vagaries and superstitions were it not for the fact that one of these phenomena survives in our day in the ceremony of the Fire-Walk, the unquestioned evidence of whose supernormal character is afforded by competent observers. If the latter is performed by reason of supernormal faculty, that fact will somewhat change the view regarding the historical cases, and offer a reasonable explanation for such instances of genuine exemption as may have occurred, if any.

But one form of ordeal—that of fire—will be considered, and only to note its occurrence and its similar-

ity to the modern rite. The only interest either can have for us here is in its possible evidence of a supernatural condition.

Its Antiquity and Diffusion.

Greece and Rome.

The practice, both as a religious rite and a judicial procedure, is of greater antiquity than any special form of religion. Pliny speaks of a few families known as Hirpi (a Totem group, according to Lang), who performed a yearly sacrifice on Mount Socrate, a few miles from Rome, on which occasion they would walk barefooted over heaps of burning coals without injury. (*Nat. Hist.* iv. c. 2). Strabo adds that the spectacle drew great numbers.

In the *Antigone* of Sophocles, a suspected person declares himself ready "to handle hot iron, and to walk over fire." It is said to have been a usual form of purgation.

India.

In the collection of papers relating to the *History and Antiquities, the Arts, Sciences and Literature of Asia*, there is an interesting paper on *Trial by Ordeal among the Hindus*, by a native, the chief magistrate of Benares, and contributed by Warren Hastings, in which the ancient *Indian Law of Ordeal* is given, and among others the fire-ordeal is described. One kind is that of walking barefooted through an excavation filled with a fire of pippal wood; the other is the carrying of "an iron ball, or the head of a lance, red-hot," etc.

The ceremony for the latter is given in detail and is characterized by the same prominence of religious features found elsewhere. The writer relates witnessing a trial of this kind in Benares in 1783. After reciting the preparation of the accused and the worship, oblations and recitation of mantras by the Pandits, he continues:

"To remove all suspicion of deceit, they washed

his hands with pure water ; then having written a state of the case, and the words of the mantra on a palmyra-leaf, they tied it on his head ; and put into his hands, which they opened and joined together, seven leaves of pippal, seven of jend, seven blades of darbha grass, a few flowers, and some barley moistened with curds, which they fastened with threads of raw white cotton. After this they made the ball red-hot, and taking it up with tongs, placed it in his hands ; he walked with it step by step through each of the seven intermediate rings, and threw the ball into the ninth, where it burnt the grass that had been left in it."

The narrator states that the accused person's hands were wholly uninjured, and that the trial was witnessed by a large number.

He relates other cases, one of trial by hot oil, in which the accused was burned, though still protesting innocence. In answers to questions on this case put by the Governor General, it was stated that the accused, though submitting to the trial, was afraid.

The antiquity of the Hindu ordeal and the close similarity in detail with that which obtained in Europe, suggests the origin of the latter.

England.

In England, the "fire-ordeal was performed either by taking up in the hands, unhurt, a piece of red-hot iron of one, two, or three pounds weight ; or else by walking barefoot and blindfold over nine red-hot ploughshares, laid lengthwise at equal distances." (*Bl. Com.* IV, 343.) It was presided over by the clergy and performed in churches or on other consecrated ground (*Id.*, 344).

Gibson, above cited, says the story of Queen Emma's trial is the only one of the latter kind mentioned in English historical records, and that it deserves little credit (273). See his paper cited, in which the ancient law of Æthelstan on the subject and instances of trials are given.

Jeremy Collier, in his *Ecclesiastical History*, Book III, 232, says :

"The Christians of this age had a strong reliance upon this way of trial, and not in the least doubting but that God would suspend the forces of nature, and clear the truth by a supernatural interposition. If we may believe the records of these times, we shall find that innocent persons were frequently rescued in a surprising manner."

His account of the requirements as to days of fasting and prayer, and the religious rites accompanying the trial, is suggestive of the condition of the participants.

Very early the canon law declared against trial by ordeal, and the practice was abolished in England in the reign of Henry III.

Exercise not Always Judicial.

This alleged immunity from injury by fire has not always been claimed alone for the innocent accused, but by some as a hereditary faculty, and its exercise undertaken merely as a religious rite. While the fire-ordeal, as a method of trial, probably does not exist to-day, the relic of the other survives in the modern fire-walk. Mr. Andrew Lang says :

"The fire-walkers in Bulgaria are called *Nistanares*, and the faculty is regarded as *hereditary*. We find the same opinion in Fiji, in ancient Italy, and in the Spain of the last century." (*Proc. S. P. K.*, V. xv, 11.)

In the modern cases the faculty is generally claimed to reside in a special caste, who enjoy immunity, and who are able to confer the exemption upon others. It is generally a religious rite, and the power is claimed to be conferred by reason of superior merit acquired by acts of self-denial, fasting, and religious ceremonies.

Thus the belief in a supernatural cause for the phenomena has survived, but the belief in its interposition on behalf of innocence has ceased to be a motive in the rite.

Regarding the modern cases, the easy explanation of fraud and deception have wholly failed, in the view of competent observers, to meet the facts. It may be that a further study of psychic phenomena will suggest the explanation.

Mr. Lang points out that though this remarkable rite is of great antiquity, wide diffusion and actual practice, neither physical nor anthropological science has even glanced at it except in the cases of Dr. Hocken's statement and the observations of Sir William Crookes.

The modern cases which show upon unquestioned evidence the existence of this rite, will be referred to particularly in the next paper, and suggested explanations considered thereafter.


"We have no right to assume that a decedent, by the mere fact of his decease, will see things in a larger light, or shake off the anxieties, the prepossessions, the superstitions of earth."

Thus wrote the late Mr. Myers, the eminent philosopher and psychic researcher; and psychic phenomena purporting to evidence that state support the view. Inspired by a hope for better things and a desire to banish the ills of existence, man has cherished a philosophy which seeks to realize these ends at the earliest moment, but which is postponed to a future state. He is to attain, not the result of the past of thought and action, but the goal of his hope and desire.

When he understands that what he becomes he must attain, that cause and effect are equal in any phenomenal state, that the stream of life flows on under the same laws, and the conscious states persist until changed by the ego, a new and truer philosophy will dawn, and will offer the highest encouragement to right living.

Etchings.

A Sufi Poem—with an Interpretation.

 *AID to Wamik one who never
 Knew the Lover's passion—"Why
 Solitary thus and silent,
 Solitary places haunting,
 Like a Dreamer, like a Spectre,
 Like a thing about to die?"*
*Wamik answered—"Meditating
 Flight with Azra to the Desert ;
 There by so remote a Fountain
 That, whichever way one travell'd,
 League on league, one yet should never
 See the face of Man ; for ever
 There to gaze on my Belovéd ;
 Gaze, till Gazing out of Gazing
 Grew to Being Her I gaze on,
 She and I no more, but in One
 Undivided Being blended.
 All that is by Nature twain
 Fears, or suffers by, the pain
 Of Separation : Love is only
 Perfect when itself transcends
 Itself, and, one with that it loves,
 In undivided Being blends."*

The above is Fitzgerald's rendering of a legend from a work of the Persian poet Jami. It is, in itself, a volume of philosophy and a treatise on Realization. No doubt the result of long experience and profound thought, it contains enough philosophy for one's instruction, and enough art for his endeavor for a long time. Read and study it until the full meaning is perceived.

This little story is a symbol in the form of a lover's

expression, but it speaks literal as well as symbolic truth. I have never read an intimation as to what the scholars think this means, nor would such opinion make any special difference here; to one who has studied the philosophy or experienced any of the higher results of introspection, meditation, or concentration, there is a meaning which is perfectly clear. To others it may not appear more than a terse expression of a lover's desire.

It is plain that, after the manner of Oriental writing and teaching, the sage endeavored to state in this little love story the philosophy of Realization in so far as it relates to the mystic union of consciousness—that which is in degree approached by the blending of the normal and the subliminal consciousness of which I have so often spoken. This view is rendered probable by the fact that Jami was a true Sufi, of that order of Persian mystics who so well understood this psychological attainment.

Read the poem over again. In the question there is first the sharp distinction made between the lover (him who desires the higher realization) and the "one who never knew the lover's passion" (him who aspires not). There is also expressed in the question the condition of alienation from the world, a condition precedent, in this special philosophy, to the mystic vision.

Wamik and Azra are the names of typical lovers. Azra symbolizes the higher ideal, the true self, the divine in man.

In the answer Wamik first states the desire to create the conditions under which the realization of the divine may be attained. He meditates "flight to the desert"; he would withdraw from the outer world, and for the time cut off rapport with the sense-environment. "There to gaze on my Beloved"—he would turn his whole attention to his ideal to be attained, the divine self; and "gaze till gazing out of gazing grew to Being Her I gaze on"—he would, by holding solely

and undividedly this thought and spiritual ideal in the consciousness, become the ideal itself. "She and I no more, but One Undivided Being blended." By holding thus the divine ideal the consciousness is blended therewith; the *I* and *Thou*, the human and divine states of consciousness, cease as distinctions, for they merge into One, and the human realizes itself as divine. And then he adds the reason, according to his philosophy, for human ignorance and unhappiness, namely, the state of alienation or separation from the divine consciousness. All that according to the order of natural evolution is expressed in division, either fears the pain of separation from its other self, or actually suffers by it through alienation. And finally he points the way out by declaring the supreme philosophy of it all. "Love is only perfect when itself transcends itself, and, one with that it loves, in undivided Being blends." The soul realizes its higher nature only when it transcends its normal aspect, and becomes one in consciousness with the state desired.

The symbol chosen is an admirably selected one, for the philosophy is true of it as well as of the thing symbolized. Nothing could be more fully true of Love than these statements. It is equally true of this phase of higher realization. And this adaptability of Love as a symbol for the other is by reason of the fact that Love, the true state, is, in so far as it is perceived, an adaptation of divine consciousness to the conditions of time and space. This is perhaps the reason that Love is always a way to Realization with the mystics.

Psychologically considered, the statements of the poem are of profound truths.

They express, tersely, fundamental laws of mind, and those so expressed are the basis of not only a wide field of mental and psychic phenomena, but of the practices of introspection, meditation and concentration. There is mental abstraction from the many and the attention to the one. There is concentration

upon the one and the merging the consciousness into it. There is the transcendence of the consciousness of self as distinct from the ideal contemplated, and the blending of the two in one state. All these modes of experience are accurately stated.

It is a treatise on the psychology of attention, the rules of concentration, and the philosophy of Realization.

Participation in Nature.

AT such season when Nature expresses most fully the rhythmic impulse of Life, come into closer rapport with its subtle influence. It may be at the sea-shore or in the mountains, in the pine woods or on the plain, that fortune or circumstance brings you close to the great serene and earnest soul of Nature; or it may be those early-morning walks and little unpretentious excursions from your door that introduce you to the power of the sunshine and recalls the way-side flower and the inspiring moods of sky and view. They are always present, and we need only recognize them to profit by their beneficence.

The desire and purpose unite the consciousness to their objects, and when these are conventional and artificial the consciousness is dwarfed to their unyielding standards and the sources of inspiration are cut off.

Let go the conventional and artificial occasionally and renew the soul in the fuller and deeper experience. Recognize the brotherhood of Life. Do not stifle the thrill of Being which is awakened by the subtle influences and suggestions of Nature; participate in the hush of the deep, solemn woods, the plaint of the speeding winds, the distant call of the solitary bird and the joy of the near-by songster, the subtle perfume of field and wild-flower; be one with it all, yet yourself.

The more complete life, is the healthful and unfolding life. Renew a conscious relation with these primal sources. Gather up the lost memories that bind you to

all life. You are not an interloper from some other planet; the history of life here is the history of your life. Renew yourself in consciousness with its majestic pageant through the love of Nature. Here are suggestions of power and strength and youth; respond unreservedly to them. The same power that inspires the recurring glow of youth in Nature likewise touches the ego with its magic. Its visible manifestation alone is a powerful nature-suggestion of youthful life to the soul. Come into harmony with it.

Let the soul-memory awaken a knowledge of its heritage by this close acquaintance with Nature—not through the means of the gun or rod, or the ruthless and despoiling hand, neither as a cold and curious observer or an impudent searcher after supposed secrets; but as a participant in its very spirit, and an intimate, sympathetic, and desirous companion.

Life and Chemism.

How much more is life than chemism? If in studying environment and response to it, we find that the equation is balanced, that is, that there is nothing in the response a cause for which does not exist in the environment, we will have simply natural force or energy. This, in simplest terms, is what chemical action is—a readjustment of an element with its environment, which may be another element or a combination of such. The action does not transcend the possibilities of its pre-determined affinities with that environment.

But if we find that there is not only this equation of affinity, but that there is a greater response than it necessarily calls for, a response which is not pre-determined by an invariable measure or necessity, then we have another element to deal with, which is Life.

The response in such case not only includes the exact effect of the natural environmental cause, but also the effect of original purpose and action, the cause of

which is not found in the environment, but resides in Life itself. Neither is its action an invariable necessity, either as to time, quality, or extent.

Here, then, is an impassable line of distinction between natural energy and Life.

To illustrate, take the simplest example—a life-cell. As a whole, as well as by its parts, the cell seeks to adjust itself to every condition of environment, and we call the order of that adjustment natural law—as gravitation, cohesion, chemism. But the cell also responds to environment in another manner entirely different from these named modes; that is, through the mental life. It feels, and at once changes its structure and condition accordingly. This change, and the energy and purpose which caused it, are super-added to the change through natural law, and the sum of all the results transcends the *natural* cause, that is, that cause found only in gravitation, cohesion, and chemism. By the measure of this transcendence we have the manifestation of Life.

BOOK REVIEW.

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